

Monday, November 03, 2008

From the Coeur d'Alene Press

- No new education news stories posted online today.

From the Spokesman-Review

- No new education news stories posted online today.

From the Moscow Pullman Daily News (password required)

- Wanted: Dean of Engineering College

From the Lewiston Tribune (password required)

- Scoring No Child

From the Idaho-Press Tribune, Nampa

- Dogs deter drug use in schools

From the Idaho Statesman

- No new education news stories posted online today.

From the Twin Falls Times-News

- Switching schools
- White Pine Elementary evacuated after fan malfunction sets off fire alarm
- University endowments hit a rough stretch
- All for change: Buhl students raise money for UNICEF

From the Idaho State Journal (password Required)

- After-school funds earn thumbs up
- ISU establishes new Ph.D. program in English
- Why District 25 is looking at school boundaries (Commentary)

From the Idaho Falls Post Register (password required)

- Pumpkins and physics
- Potlatch ends college scholarships

FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

No new education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Wanted: Dean of Engineering College

Officials want a voice during UI program shuffle

By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Saturday, November 01, 2008

The University of Idaho's College of Engineering is scrambling to fill a vacancy left by Dean Aicha Elshabini's resignation last month.

Elshabini stepped down Oct. 10 to return to a faculty position within the college. Acting Dean Howard Peavy said the move was not unusual, but the timing was a bit unfortunate.

Peavy said the college hopes to have an interim dean as soon as possible, so they can dive into an ongoing "strategic prioritization" of the entire university.

"That position will be very much involved in this transformation," he said.

Officials within the engineering college think it's important to have a dean in place who can effectively represent the college's interest during the overall university reprioritization.

UI President Steven Daley-Laursen announced the reprioritization and the implementation of a universitywide hiring "pause" during his fall address to the university community. The pause and reprioritization were adopted with the goal of saving the university money in some areas that could be used in other, more strategic areas.

The picture became more complicated when Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter ordered a 1 percent statewide budget holdback.

The reprioritization is moving forward at a rapid pace. Budget reallocations are slated to be completed by the end of the calendar year, with program prioritization continuing into February.

Deans from each college will meet next weekend to discuss the "rough cut" of programs.

Peavy said each college will divide programs into high, medium and low priority. The deans will then compare their lowest-priority programs against each other.

Elshabini asked Peavy to take her place on the program prioritization project several weeks before she stepped down.

Peavy has served as both associate and acting dean since Elshabini stepped down, but the search is on for an interim dean.

Provost Doug Baker sent an internal memo to engineering students, faculty and staff Wednesday, both identifying the search committee and imposing a hasty timeline for the process: the deadline for nominations is noon Monday.

Peavy said the college hopes to have a permanent dean by fall 2010, with an interim dean until then.

"This is going to be a quick process, but given the nature of it, taking another two or three weeks wouldn't add anything to it," Peavy said.

Peavy said he is not interested in, nor is he in the running for, the interim or permanent position.

The search committee is made up of Vice President for Research Jack McIver; engineering faculty members Karen Den Braven, Ralph Budwig, Clint Jeffery and Ed Schmeckpeper; Electrical and Computer Engineering chairman Brian Johnson; and alumnus Brent Keeth of Micron, Inc.

Peavy is not involved in the search process. He said the UI won't conduct a national search because of the temporary nature of the position.

The interim dean will most likely come from within the UI, Washington State University, or be a retired faculty member willing to come back through June 30, 2010.

College spokeswoman Leah Andrews said Peavy has not asked for any additional compensation.

Andrews said Elshabini will retain her dean's salary of about \$230,831 for six months. She then will receive a salary of \$184,668 for her faculty position and position as director of the Center for Advanced Microelectronics and Biomolecular Research.

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FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Scoring No Child

Local, state officials say controversial federal education act probably will see some fine-tuning when new administration takes the reins in January

By Kerri Sandaine of the Tribune

Sunday, November 2, 2008

Standardized testing is part of the No Child Left Behind legacy.

"I think regardless of the outcome of the election, some changes will be made. We all know the common complaints. There is such a reliance on standardized testing, some schools have thought about adopting the slogan, 'All testing all the time.' " Bruce Bradberry, superintendent, Troy (Idaho) schools

Many educators give the concept of No Child Left Behind an A, but say the reality of meeting federal education requirements flunks the practicality test.

Area administrators are hopeful the law will get tweaked during the next four years, regardless of who ends up in the White House after Tuesday's vote.

"Whoever comes into office is going to have to take a good hard look at this, and ask how can we get at those good principles without unfunded mandates and asking school districts to do the impossible," said Eric Price, curriculum director of the Clarkston School District. "It's a great idea, but the feds did not meet standards on implementation."

No Child Left Behind, the centerpiece of President George W. Bush's education agenda, mandates that all children, regardless of language ability, background or disability, must meet proficiency levels in reading and math by 2014. The law was passed in 2001 with bipartisan support in Congress.

The mood in Washington, D.C., has shifted a bit since the law went into effect, said Troy, Idaho, school Superintendent Bruce Bradberry.

"I'm a little optimistic. I think regardless of the outcome of the election, some changes will be made. We all know the common complaints. There is such a reliance on standardized testing, some schools have thought about adopting the slogan, 'All testing all the time.' "

Idaho State Superintendent Tom Luna worked for the Bush administration for two years, helping states apply the law. He said some common-sense changes are likely.

"It's been in place long enough that we know what's working and what's not working," Luna said. "It reminds me of an old Clint Eastwood movie, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.' "

On the plus side, the law has led to some school improvements, he said. "Now we are focused on results. In a short period of time, education has been transformed. For too long we were judging education by inputs and not results. Another positive is that it has focused a laser on reading and math skills."

But there needs to be more focus on student academic growth and differentiated consequences for schools, Luna said. As the law reads now, there are 41 different subgroups and if one of those subgroups doesn't meet standards, the school lands in need-of-improvement status.

And Luna objects to how often the word "failing" creeps into the dialogue about schools that are in need of improvement. "Shaquille O'Neal is a great basketball player. If you broke down his stats, you'd find he's a terrible free-throw shooter. That doesn't mean he is failing as a basketball player. He just needs to focus more on his free throws."

No Child Left Behind isn't going away, Luna said. "There is a lot of bipartisan support for it. I think it will be a better law when they make some changes, and education will be better off because of it. As long as they're going to spend federal tax dollars on education, there has to be accountability. I don't push back against accountability, but I think there should be some flexibility available for us on how we report how we spent the money and the results that we get."

Area administrators say they don't have a problem with accountability and making improvements. The devil is in the details.

"I think it's allowed us to take a real strong look at our curriculum and be real clear about our standards," said Lewiston Superintendent Joy Rapp. "It set a national agenda, and the concept on a policy level is good. When it comes down to how that plays out in the district, it isn't realistic. It allows a state to misidentify schools as failing. As we draw closer to 2014, unless the law is modified, states won't have the capacity to do what's required by law."

Mike Haberman, director of special services for the Lewiston School District, said it's inspiring to hear, "no child left behind," but because of the way the law is structured, the perception is there's more emphasis on failure than success.

And if the massive education policy is modified at the federal level, it won't be the first time. The law has its roots in President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, Haberman said, noting No Child Left Behind is essentially the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Jo Ann Webb, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., said any changes made by a new administration can't be predicted at this stage. "We have no idea. That's kind of a shot in the dark."

Webb is quick to point out the law's accomplishments over the past six years, saying the closing of the achievement gap has been huge.

"We've been able to identify many of the children who were left behind in the past and target resources to those schools where needs are the greatest and the children are not performing well academically."

Federal funds are pumped into schools to pay for some No Child Left Behind programs. Schools in the state of Washington received about \$385 million this year. In Idaho, the figure is close to \$93 million.

But federal funding doesn't cover all the costs associated with carrying out the law's requirements, administrators say, and it isn't all new money, since most of the programs were already in place.

There are strings attached, as federal funds are tied to a school's performance. If a school continues to not meet standards, the state can go so far as to take it over. "The possible sanctions are scary," said Clarkston's Price.

The punitive nature of No Child Left Behind is one of its downsides, he said.

"Kids are not widgets. We've got kids that are meth-affected. We've got family issues. There are so many things that come into education in addition to assessment. Kids are kids and they're different. People are messy. It's incredibly complicated, and different kids need different things at different times."

Teachers are dealing with behavior and social-emotional issues that have to be met before they can get to educational gains, Price said.

"Oftentimes, the school is plugging in some family holes. We have to meet those needs before the kid can learn reading, writing and arithmetic. Another issue is domestic abuse. Johnny may come to school and he just saw mom get abused at home and that's why he didn't get his homework done. Those types of things are increasingly becoming part of the picture, and that doesn't figure into the No Child Left Behind data and Adequate Yearly Progress."

In addition, Price said the idea that kids are helped by making teachers jump through more hoops is absurd. He believes the law could be improved by changing the part pertaining to highly qualified teachers and coming up with a consistent measure of academic learning.

"Our test in Washington is very different than the test they take in Texas, so it's not an equal comparison. It isn't apples to apples. I think the more feds stay out of it, the better off we are. I'm not throwing bombs at No Child, because there are some places in our nation where education isn't going as well as it could be. Washington is not one of those places. We are at the forefront of education, and I think we have outstanding teachers."

Troy's Bradberry said he believes the law was motivated largely by folks who don't think very highly of public schools and teachers' unions.

"Mostly, it's a federal program put together by people who see the problems of big urban schools," Bradberry said. "The policy is filled with flaws and contradictions, and it's a strange fit for schools in a state like Idaho. Some of those contradictions include a concept that rests on a statistical impossibility, which has been called the Lake Wobegon effect of 'all our children are above average.' "

The goal is every child will be at a certain level by 2014, and, statistically, that is not going to happen, Bradberry explained. "Eventually all schools will fail, it's just a matter of when."

But there have been some good side effects from No Child Left Behind, he said. New assessment tools have been developed so schools can understand the learning needs of students much more quickly, and it has accompanied a shift in focus to the student-centered classroom instead of a teacher-centered focus, he said.

"It has encouraged us to look at ourselves based on how the student is learning, which is a good thing. Improving the teaching of reading and math are essential. We all know that. We have to teach our kids to read perfectly and do math amazingly. But I'm an old history and music teacher, and I know those are also essential in an education. My position is you can't quantify education."

As changes are made to the policy at the federal level, Bradberry predicts "a lot of posteriors will have to be covered."

"I'm sure we'll still be spending tons of time and money to keep everybody happy, even though we'd rather be spending it on things that actually teach kids."

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FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

Dogs deter drug use in schools

Alisa Angelakis

aangelakis@idahopress.com Updated 11 hours 36 minutes ago CANYON COUNTY — Local law enforcement conducted drug detection demonstrations with the help of some furry friends in area schools during Red Ribbon Week.

Red Ribbon Week is a national annual anti-drug event to educate individuals, families and communities on the destructive effects of drugs, while highlighting the positive alternatives that are available.

Every year, schools schedule special events and invite guest speakers. Nampa Mayor Tom Dale, Olympic gold medalist Kristin Armstrong — and a few friendly and furry guests — were welcomed at local schools in honor of the event.

Teacher, students enjoy Red Ribbon Week

Deanna Brock, eighth-grade math teacher at Middleton Middle School, said she helped plan Red Ribbon Week events.

“We had different themes for different days and a door decorating contest,” she said.

One common theme for the week is, “I’ve got better things to do than drugs.”

One day, students were encouraged to come to school dressed for the specific things they liked to do.

“We had people running around in snowboarding clothes and skateboarding clothes,” Brock said.

“Some were dressed as hunters in their camo. We had hip hop dancers and others.”

Another day, students wore red in honor of red ribbon week.

Monday was “sock it to drugs” day and that explained the crazy socks that students and staff wore at the assembly.

Students wore slippers to school on “give drugs the slip” day and sweats on “drug free: no sweat” day.

Mihaela Karst, a sixth-grader, said she enjoyed Red Ribbon Week.

“I like how all the schools have special days to be able to show we have better things to do than drugs,” she said.

Other local schools run similar programs during Red Ribbon Week.

Drug use in Idaho schools

Matt McCarter, Safe and Drug-Free Schools coordinator for the State Department of Education, said recent statistics have shown a slight decline in alcohol and tobacco use by Idaho students.

Drug use has increased slightly, but McCarter said more specific data was needed.

“We haven’t drilled down to the level of what drugs are being used,” he said.

This year, the drug section has been broken into five categories, so by the end of the year, there will be more detailed statistics, McCarter said.

Data is compiled from school-based reporting of incidences related to substance use and violence and an anonymous survey given to sixth through twelfth-graders.

McCarter said prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs and marijuana are the most prevalent drugs in Idaho schools.

“There are a wide range of very compelling home-grown strategies the districts are implementing to create a culture of nonuse in schools,” he said. “There are a great number of mentors and proponents in schools who have begun to have some deep impact in community denial, parent denial and providing support for young people who are struggling.”

McCarter said substance abuse prevention is only half of the picture. The other half of the picture is violence prevention, he said.

Reinforce Red Ribbon Week in your home

Canyon County Sheriff Chris Smith said his K-9 units had trained 13 dogs to detect drugs.

“They’re available and ready to go to work at a moment’s notice,” he said. “If someone is suspected of having drugs on their person or in their locker, they now know that the dogs are going to find them. It works as a big deterrent and also as a relationship (builder) with students. Everyone likes dogs.”

K-9 supervisor Bryce Moore said most of his Red Ribbon Week demonstrations are done at the elementary and middle school level.

“I think we have a bigger impact on lower grades. The dogs are exciting to them,” he said. “The high school students like to see more of our apprehension techniques ... dogs biting suspects.”

Nampa Police School Resource Officer Jacob Peper also is a K-9 handler.

Peper has been making his rounds to Nampa schools during Red Ribbon Week for more than five years.

“It’s extremely informative,” he said. “It’s a good time to educate the children, collectively, about the dangers of drug use.” Peper conducted K-9 training exercises for grades K through 12.

Dogs steal the show at assembly

Deputies from the Canyon County Sheriff’s Office K-9 division brought three dogs to Red Ribbon assemblies in Middleton last Monday and performed training exercises for the students.

Deputy Chris Davidson said the dogs see drug detection as all fun and games.

The K-9’s receive a reward, usually a ball, when they find the drugs, he said.

Student volunteers at Middleton Middle School helped the deputies demonstrate a K-9 search of a car and of a few students. Both times, the dog sat down when he located the drugs that had been planted by deputies.

“We’re fighting this war on drugs, and these K-9’s are here to help us,” Deputy Heather Leavell said.

Davidson said the dogs aren’t aggressive in their search; they follow the commands of their trainer.

But when force is needed, K-9’s can provide it.

“We will demonstrate what happens when you run from police,” Davidson said.

An officer, dressed in a big, thick coat, acted as a suspect running from a K-9 unit. On command, the dog latched onto the man’s arm with his teeth and would not let go.

Davidson said the K-9’s won’t let go of a suspect until commanded to by their trainer.

Davidson encouraged students to say no to drugs.

“Drugs are bad. We like to deal with you on good terms, not bad terms,” he said.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

No new education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

Switching schools

Number of Bruins choosing Canyon Ridge for senior year exceeds goal

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

They may be Bruins now, but many are willing to become Riverhawks next year.

There will be 156 students attending Canyon Ridge High School next year for their senior year, while 276 students will remain at Twin Falls High School, said Brady Dickinson, principal of Canyon Ridge.

As construction of the new Canyon Ridge High School in western Twin Falls continues, juniors at Twin Falls High School were given the opportunity to tell Twin Falls School District where they wanted to spend their senior year in 2009-2010. The 156-member senior class next year goes beyond the district's goal of at least 130 students who were willing to attend the new school.

The entire enrollment for Canyon Ridge High School in 2009 is expected to be 858, while the projected enrollment for Twin Falls High School is 1,158. That means both schools will have numbers below 1,280, a requirement to stay within the 4A classification of the Idaho High School Activities Association.

Most of the students who turned in forms chose to attend the school in their zone. Students in the Vera C. O'Leary Junior High School zone will be at Twin Falls High, and those in the Robert Stuart Junior High zone will be at Canyon Ridge High.

Out of all the juniors, 27 living in the Twin Falls High School zone chose Canyon Ridge. And 46 in the Canyon Ridge zone wanted to remain at Twin Falls High School for their senior year.

Nearly 300 of the 432 juniors completed forms by the Oct. 15 deadline. The remaining students were assigned to the high school in their respective zones.

"The kids have been real receptive," Dickinson said.

The next steps in planning for the first year at Canyon Ridge High include arranging staffing. And with anticipated enrollment numbers now known, teachers will look at how many sections of classes are needed, Dickinson said.

Ben Botkin may be reached at 208-735-3238 or bbotkin@magicvalley.com.

White Pine Elementary evacuated after fan malfunction sets off fire alarm

Laurie Welch
Times-News writer

An electric fan motor that seized up triggered a fire alarm at White Pine Elementary School, causing the students to evacuate for about 20 minutes.

White Pine Elementary School Vice Principal Ross Barson said students were evacuated from their classrooms into groups outside on the lawn.

"The fire department found it quick," Barson said. "Bless their hearts, the firemen did a good job and everything is okay."

Burley Fire Chief Steven Hamilton said the fire department was notified that the alarm had been triggered by the alarm company at 10:43 a.m.

"The furnace motor seized up and there was a light hazy smoke in the library that triggered the smoke detector in the library," Hamilton said.

Hamilton said there were no flames showing during the incident and the only damage incurred was the damage caused by the furnace motor seizing up.

Firefighters set up a big fan to help clear out the smoke and left the school by 11:03 a.m., Hamilton said.

"Everything is fine except for our noses," Barson said. "The hot electric wires don't smell too good."

Laurie Welch may be reached at 208-677-8767 or lwelch@magicvalley.com.

University endowments hit a rough stretch

By Jessie L. Bonner
Associated Press writer

BOISE - Turmoil in the stock market also has eroded the endowments of state's two largest universities by as much as 12 percent since last year, according to the private foundations that manage assets for the schools.

Boise State University's endowment - money and other financial assets donated to the school to invest - shrunk to \$87 million in September, a 12 percent drop since July 2007, said Howard Smith, university vice president for advancement.

The total portfolio managed by the fundraising arm of the university, the Boise State University Foundation, was valued at \$129 million in September and decreased by 10 percent when compared to last year, Smith said.

While a university fundraising campaign passed the \$100 million mark this month, donors are proceeding with caution and giving money to the school over longer periods of time. "They're waiting for the market to stabilize," Smith said.

For the CSI Foundation, its investments are down, though overall assets have increased by \$900,000 since last year, according to its audit covering June 2007 to June 2008. Of the foundation's \$25.2 million in assets, \$22.05 million was in investments as of June, said Curtis Eaton, the executive director.

Those investments have gone down between the start of this year and the end of September by varying degrees. The investments are divided between two managers who handle them differently. One manager has investments that were down 9.4 percent, while the other manager's investments were down about 7 percent, Eaton said.

"Even though both of the managers are down, they are down very, very much less than the market as a whole and that reflects the foundation board's conservative management," Eaton said, adding that the investment managers have taken steps to reduce the exposure to the stock market.

The foundation spent \$965,000 last year on scholarships.

The foundation has recently started a fundraising campaign and there has been an enthusiastic response from college employees so far, Eaton said, adding that the community support is crucial.

"There is money available to students at CSI because people in the community have been generous over the years and that community support has been absolutely critical in getting educational opportunities," he said.

The University of Idaho reports its endowment held \$176 million in June 2008, a loss of more than 8 percent from June 2007. The total assets the foundation manages for the school fell nearly 8 percent overall, from \$235 million in June 2007 to \$216 million in June 2008.

While the stock market chipped away at university assets, donations to the Moscow school in northern Idaho have also doubled from \$11.8 million to \$21.2 million during the past two years, said foundation executive director Chris Murray.

"The economy could be doing us a better favor," Murray said. "But I think our secret weapon is our alumni."

All for change: Buhl students raise money for UNICEF

By Blair Koch

Times-News correspondent

BUHL - About 20 members of Buhl High School's Key Club, dressed as glittering fairies, gangsters, Indians and cheerleaders, took to the streets for Halloween goodies on Friday.

But instead of plastic bags they carried small orange cardboard boxes. Club members weren't trick or treating for themselves, they were doing it for UNICEF. Instead of candy bars and suckers, they were collecting loose change.

Freshman Maegan Pato, who helped a friend with the club's annual Halloween service project, was excited to again be involved.

"I think we collected about \$20 last year, so I hope to do at least that this year," Pato said.

It was the first time Pato's friend, Taylor Quesnell, went trick or treating for UNICEF.

"It's for a good cause," she said. "I don't really have a goal, so collecting any amount of money will be good."

Key Club members hoped to collect at least \$100 for UNICEF, an international organization dedicated to helping children across the globe overcome poverty, violence, disease, discrimination and other obstacles.

One hundred bucks doesn't go very far in the United States, but when spent through UNICEF it could pay for 225 kids to be vaccinated against measles.

Key Club co-advisor Shawna Clemens said any money raised will go toward the \$2-million goal set by Key Club International.

"In addition to the Halloween outing we've had boxes around town for donations," Clemens said. "The money raised will go to Swaziland to help pay for kids' immunizations, clothes and other essentials."

Clemens was a Key Club member as a BHS student and said she is excited to be back on board as an advisor. She is employed at the high school as the counseling office secretary.

"I remember being a member and it was a positive experience during my high school years," she said.

Now that Halloween has come and gone the club is gearing up for another annual service project - a November canned-food drive. The food will be delivered to Magic Valley families in time for Thanksgiving.

Blair Koch may be reached at 208-316-2607 or blairkoch@gmail.com.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

After-school funds earn thumbs up

Thumbs up:

to the federal government for offering \$1.25 million in grant money for Idaho after-school programs. The state Department of Education will administer the grants, which are designed to provide activities for children who might otherwise be home alone after school. After-school programs keep kids out of trouble, and can be a great way to offer education in the arts and other subjects that have been left by the wayside in some schools as the focus on basics such as reading and math have increased.

ISU establishes new Ph.D. program in English

POCATELLO – The Department of English and Philosophy at Idaho State University has established a new Ph.D. program in English and the teaching of English that will be offered beginning fall 2009. The program will offer the only Ph.D. in English in the state of Idaho. The program, which integrates the study of literature and English pedagogy, will train students for teaching careers in English at two- and four-year colleges and universities.

“The English Department’s shift to the Ph.D. from the D.A. further strengthens an already sound doctoral program, enabling it to better meet the evolving needs of doctoral students throughout the state and region,” said ISU associate provost Stephen Adkison, Ph.D.

In the fall of 2009, the department will begin phasing out its Doctor of Arts (D.A.) degree program. Students currently enrolled in the D.A. program will have the option of completing the D.A. or enrolling in the new Ph.D. program.

Why District 25 is looking at school boundaries (Commentary)

Mary Vagner is superintendent of Pocatello-Chubbuck School District 25.

Over the past year and a half a volunteer boundary subcommittee, consisting of district administration and staff and members of the community, has been considering high school capacity and boundary issues. This subcommittee was a part of the District’s Long Range Facilities Management Steering Committee. Many of the committee members are content experts who provided technical expertise to this process.

Recently, the district held six external and internal public input meetings to inform parents, students, staff and patrons of the four boundary options provided to the board by this committee, and to receive their input. One of the options submitted by the committee is the current boundary configuration. Two options provided for equalizing the enrollment among the three high schools and two options provided proportional enrollment based on the school’s optimal capacity. About 100 people attended the three meetings. Also, throughout the yearlong process formal and informal input has been ongoing.

Boundary discussions and issues are always difficult, stirring emotions from all sides. We knew this as we started the process. The board has been courageous to engage in this long term planning. Population within the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District has grown and relocated. As we prepare for increased numbers of students moving through our high schools, we would be negligent if we did not study and develop a consistent plan to address school capacity and boundary issues.

The process of studying boundary and capacity issues involves more than redrawing boundary lines. It requires the best information currently available on projected growth and development to assess shifts in population in the community and enrollment. It requires the inclusion of socio/economic information to balance schools demographically. It requires the best use of limited resources. But most importantly, it requires using research-based data to provide the best learning environment for all students relative to academic success, extracurricular opportunities and safety.

The board and administration are now in the process of reviewing the findings and options of the year-long work provided by the committee and through public input. This information will be considered in conjunction with best practices for providing optimal instructional opportunities and safety, within our tax-based resources.

An end goal will include developing a plan for setting optimal enrollment capacities and consistently maintaining enrollments at our local high schools.

Recommendations will be given to the Board of Directors at their Nov. 4 work session and the final decision is expected at the Nov. 18 board meeting. Both of these meetings are public meetings in which the board conducts the business of the district.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Pumpkins and physics

Students take place in annual Pumpkin Chuck contest

Monte LaOrange / mlaorange@postregister.com - Snake River High School students Jordan Lynn, left, Austin Garrett, center, and Nick Gelles yell "get-r-done" as they pull the release on the trebuchet nicknamed "Da Redneck." A group of students in Mr. Alvin Stalder's physics class built the trebuchet and was busy manning the machine during the 12th annual Pumpkin Chuck at Snake River High School on Friday morning.

Dozens of youngsters converged Friday on Winfield Andersen Field near Snake River High School for the annual Pumpkin Chuck.

In its 12th year, the event is a physics lesson disguised as a contest in which students build a pumpkin-hurling contraption and are judged on its performance.

Teams come from all over -- Idaho State University, Eagle Rock Junior High School, Blackfoot High School and Clair E. Gale Junior High School, among others -- to compete.

Their contraptions are judged in a number of ways: original design, accuracy, distance and speed (a police radar gun is used). The winners in each of three groups (junior, amateur and professional) receive a trophy, and the team with the highest composite score gets a cash prize.

Records are kept, too.

Potlatch ends college scholarships

LEWISTON (AP) -- Potlatch Corp. has announced that it's ending its 56-year college scholarship program that distributed more than \$11 million to about 3,300 high school graduates in six states.

The company will meet its commitments to students who are already attending college with the help of scholarships supplied by the company.